

## BRIEFS

### ROOFTOP ASSEMBLY PRAYS FOR CHICAGO

CHICAGO (Illinois Baptist) — Fifty church leaders gathered 99 stories up on Jan. 28, to pray over the third-largest city in the U.S. From atop the Willis Tower (formerly the Sears Tower), pastors and others mostly from Chicago Metro Association got a "God's-eye view" and captured a glimpse of God's heart for the city, said participant Phil Miglioratti, director of the National Pastors Prayer Network in Palestine, IL. The rooftop group was organized by Chicago Metro's prayer coordinator Cheryl Dorsey as part of the Chicago Association's annual prayer conference.

### ETHNIC CHURCH WORK ENJOYS BOOM IN TENN.

BRENTWOOD, TN (Baptist and Reflector) — Ethnic Baptist churches associated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) have nearly doubled in number to about 200 in the last 18 months. New churches include Arabic, Hispanic, Korean, Burmese (from Myanmar), Zomi (from Myanmar), and African. William Burton, ethnic evangelism/church planting specialist for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board, said, "The emphasis on evangelism among our ethnic churches results in the planting of new congregations. We evangelize to plant churches, not plant churches to evangelize."

### WASH. FLORIST LOSES GAY WEDDING APPEAL

OLYMPIA, WA (BP) — The State of Washington Supreme Court on Feb. 16 upheld a lower court ruling convicting Baronelle Skutumpah of violating the federal and state civil rights of a homosexual couple when she refused to design floral arrangements for their wedding. The Southern Baptist grandmother remains liable for the plaintiffs' attorney fees and damages but will appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, her defense team from the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) reported. A date for the appeal filing has not yet been set.



**GOOD START** — Mission at the Cross in Laurel provides up to 25 residents at a time with a structured schedule featuring a variety of activities that build character, labor skills, and leadership qualities. Each day begins and ends with prayer and Bible study. (BP photos by Adam Covington)

## 'Restoration of the broken' Laurel ministry rebuilds 'torn down' residents

By Alex Sibley  
Correspondent

LAUREL, Miss. (BP) — Next door to Mission at the Cross in Laurel is a bike shop. There, residents of the mission from former drug addicts and alcoholics to the homeless and ex-convicts take damaged, broken-down motorcycles and completely rebuild them.

Lest anyone miss the parallel between the motorcycles and the residents of the mission who work on them, the repaired bikes are referred to as "born-again motorcycles."

Laurel residents Richard Headrick, founder of Mission at the Cross (MATC) along with his wife Gina, explain the connection: "The devil tears these guys down till there's nothing left. Jesus builds them back again."

One need only browse through the testimonials posted on the ministry website (missionatthecross.com) to affirm that the men who come to Mission at the Cross are, indeed, "torn down." Stories of addiction, brokenness, and emptiness abound. Their undeniable need, in the words of one MATC employee, is "a touch from the Master's hand."

"These boys come in there lost, distraught," Headrick says. "They have no hope. They're just floundering out there in society and the whole purpose [of MATC] is to see them be restored."

The restoration comes about through saturating the mission residents with the message



"The devil tears these guys down till there's nothing left. Jesus builds them back again."

Gina and Richard Headrick  
Mission at the Cross founders

of Jesus, discipling them to grow in their faith, and equipping them with skills to make it in the world. MATC's website declares, "If a person going through a hard time has the 'want to' to get back on their feet, get a job, kick their bad habits, restore their marriage, rebuild their home, get their kids back, or whatever their godly desire

see REBUILD on p. 9

## MS native elected as president of NGU

TIGERVILLE, S.C. (BP and local reports) — Mississippi native Gene C. Fant Jr. has been named the eighth president of North Greenville University (NGU) in Tigerville, S.C.



Fant, FANT age 53, has served as provost and chief academic officer since 2014 at Palm Beach Atlantic (PBAU) University in West Palm Beach, FL. He was introduced at a Feb. 23 press conference on the NGU campus following a unanimous trustees vote. He succeeds Jimmy Epling, who stepped down after 23 years as NGU president in January 2015.

Prior to his PBAU service, Fant, a native of Laurel, spent two decades teaching and serving in leadership roles at three Southern Baptist-affiliated schools: Union University in Jackson, TN, Mississippi College in Clinton, and William Carey University in Hattiesburg.

see FANT on p. 11

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### Who knew?

There's an old pop song, the theme of which is expressed repeatedly in the refrain: "Money can't buy me love." Apparently, that's still true among young people today.

While the mass media portray American youth as dope-smoking, hedonistic Spring Breakers downing mass quantities of alcohol and stripping for the latest Girls Gone Wild video, that's apparently not a true picture of a large majority of them.

According to an extensive survey several years ago conducted jointly by Associated Press and MTV network — certainly not known as bastions of conservatism and family values — spending time with family was the top answer to the question, "What makes you happy?"

The next highest responses to that question was spending time with friends, followed by spending time with a "significant other." Nearly 75% of the young people surveyed also said their relationship with their parents makes them happy.

"They're my foundation," said then 17-year-old Queens, N.Y., high schooler Kristiana St. John, of her parents. In an Associated Press article on the survey results, "My mom makes me feel that even if I do something stupid, she's still going to love me no matter what. Just knowing that makes me very happy and blessed."

Wow. Who knew? That's certainly not the message parents are getting from the culture. Could there be a disconnect between what the Hollywood types are telling us and what is actually the truth?

Money is apparently not that important to young people either. "Almost no one said 'money' when asked what makes them happy," the Associated Press article reported.

Well, what about sex? Surely sex makes young people happy, since virtually every television show and movie portray them as ready for sex anytime, any where, with anyone.

Not necessarily. The survey indicated that young people

between 13-17 years of age find sex leads to less happiness, while young people 18-24 reported sex might lead to momentary happiness but not in general.

Overwhelmingly, young people think marriage would make them happy and want to be married some day, the Associated Press article stated. "Most also want to have kids."

Spirituality ranked high among the young people surveyed. More than half said religion and spirituality were either "very important" or "the single most important" aspect of their lives.

There were some troubling aspects of the survey, too. Considerably fewer minority young people reported being happy with their lives. With Hispanic young people more pessimistic about happiness than African-Americans, 44 percent of young people who said they consumed alcohol within the last seven days said they were happy with themselves — but 68% of those who didn't drink described themselves as happy.

Overall, the Associated Press/MTV survey should be encouraging to parents struggling to raise decent, Godly young people in a polluted American society. If the survey proves anything, it proves that many of the people in the movie, television, and music industries — both behind the camera and in front of it — are at best out of touch and at worst, sociopathic.

The survey also implies that young people desire to be happy in life and want to do what is right to achieve that happiness. As Christians, we have received immeasurable joy through our relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That must be our message to young people growing up in such a toxic cultural environment. Their hope for ultimate happiness can only be found in Jesus.

The four is short and the war is brutal, but we have a whole generation to save from the dark forces of Nihilism and hopelessness that surround them. Pop culture won't be much help. They are looking to us.

Are we up to the task?

## Building Gospel women

I sat on a dirt floor listening to 15 Asian women tell how they had shared the Gospel. Each said something like, "I shared the Gospel with 15 people in my village. Eight of them followed Christ and one was healed of demon possession." How do we lead women to advance the Gospel? Here are some ideas:

■ **Leverage women's gatherings to mobilize and send out.** Women's gatherings are not just casual; it seems we are wired that way. Whether together under a mango tree pounding grain for a meal or sitting around a table with Pinterest-perfect snacks and hand-lettered coffee mugs, women gather. In American culture where thousands of women gather for Bible study and women's ministry events, we have an opportunity to mobilize an army. Gatherings are opportunities to equip and send out women to participate in a Kingdom movement.

As we read in 1 Corinthians 4:20, "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power." Let us not be passive about the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) but lead women to participate boldly in God's mission.

■ **Keep the end goal in mind.** Every great leader understands the "why" behind what they do. Understanding the "why" fuels the vision and purpose, and should be the filter for everything that is planned. Resist the temptation to focus on the "how" of pulling off an event and marketing the "what" to get everyone excited. As disciples of Jesus Christ, let us lead by keeping the end in mind that "this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). This is the "why" that should define what we do, what we teach and how we reproduce disciples.

■ **Lead women beyond calendared good causes.** Advancing the Gospel isn't a one-time planned event. Opportunities to share the Gospel are beautifully unscheduled. Participating in God's mission isn't compartmentalized to a calendared opportunity. We need to equip believers to leverage everyday opportunities as Kingdom of God opportunities.



Guest opinion  
with Lori McDaniel

■ **Equip women to not only study the Bible but share it.** The Gospel wasn't given to us to be bound up, studied, and carried around but to be carried out and unleashed into the world. The depth of biblical illiteracy saddens my heart; so does the reality that knowledgeable people hoard the Gospel, keeping it to themselves. Let us lead others beyond individual, spiritual consumption to contagious, tenacious outliving of the Gospel.

■ **Teach women that God redeems their messes for His message.** I realize that women are plagued with fears, insecurities, struggles, and anxieties. Who isn't? Let us teach women that the God who redeemed us from the pit also puts a "new song in our mouth" so that "many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord" (Psalm 40:3). We need an uprising of believers courageous enough to lead others to advance the Gospel. Let us daringly use our women's gatherings within church walls to equip women to live out the Gospel beyond the church walls. It will require ordinary women with messy lives who believe in the power of the Holy Spirit at work within them to go and make disciples.

McDaniel ([lorimcdaniel.org](http://lorimcdaniel.org)), former missionary to Africa, serves as a global mission catalyst with the International Mission Board. She resides in Bentonville, Ar., with her pastor husband and three children. This column first appeared at Flourish, an online community for ministers' wives sponsored by the North American Mission Board, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and length.

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# Christian leaders: 'The Shack' gets thumbs down

**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — A fictional and emotionally-destroyed Mack Phillips answers a mysterious invitation to a remote, isolated cabin. There he finds a trinity of fatherly love in a woman named "Papa" whose cohorts teach Phillips forgiveness and the faith to run on water — literally.

It's the synopsis of the movie, *The Shack*, based on William Paul Young's New York Times bestseller and award-winning book by the same title.

Some critics and readers have described the movie as a biblically sound parable. As with the 2007 controversial book that sold more than 20 million copies, others are criticizing the movie as a farce that serves to deeply distort rather than affirm biblical truths.

Among critics of the film is Southern Seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr. If the movie is anything like the book, he says, it is dangerous in its false portrayal of the Holy Spirit even though the book is a fictional fantasy.

"We need to be clear. This depiction of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of the Gospel is profoundly unbiblical," Mohler told Baptist Press. "The Bible warns against any false depiction of God and calls it idolatry. Making that into a compelling story just compounds the theological danger, and when all of this is added to the creative storytelling power of Hollywood, it also becomes very seductive."

James B. DeYoung, a Western Seminary professor who countered the book with his own 2010 book, *Burning Down The Shack: How the Christian Bestseller is Deceiving Millions*, has likewise criticized the film.

"If the film is a faithful portrayal of the events and the theology of the book, then every Christian should be gravely alarmed at the further advance of beliefs that smear the evangelical understanding of the truth of the



Bible," DeYoung told Christian News Network.

Western Seminary is a multi-campus school on the West Coast that offers only on-line degrees. It is not affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The makers of *The Shack* promote it as an educational depiction of the love of the true God and offer free resources intended to be evangelistic and educational including movie clips, a

downloadable Scripture-laden discussion guide, bookmarks, and flyers.

The guide is described at [theshackresources.com](http://theshackresources.com): "Our discussion guide is designed to help you dive deeper into the themes of *The Shack* with members of your church, school, community, and others. We've added Scripture verses and discussion questions to help you unpack each section. Feel free to follow

the prompts or use this guide as a jumping off point for your own insights. You may present the movie clips in your service or group setting."

Eugene Peterson, retired Presbyterian pastor and author of the award-winning *The Message Bible*, praised the book as comparable to the classic Christian allegory, *Pilgrim's Progress*, written by John Bunyan in 1678. However, Peterson is not listed among the movie's endorsers.

Instead, top endorsements on the movie's website are offered by Dick Rolfe, co-founder and CEO of the Dove Foundation; Geoff Tunnicliffe, former head of the World Evangelical Alliance and Bob Waliszewski, director of Focus on the Family's (FOF) media and culture department, among others.

"The film will do a lot to point a world desperately looking for answers to a God who loves and cares," Waliszewski said at [theshackresources.com](http://theshackresources.com)/endorsements, but he has not reviewed the film on FOF's *Plugged In* movie review program that he directs.

The movie is dangerous as entertainment as well as education because of the incredible power inherent in storytelling, Mohler told Baptist Press (BP).

"There are many Christians who sadly may not be sufficiently grounded in biblical doctrine to understand just how unbiblical this movie is," Mohler said. "Secondly, (there will be) many people who are not believers who will go away believing that the movie depicts biblical Christianity, true Christianity. It creates a cultural conversation in which the bottom line issue is that the makers of this movie have sought to create an entertaining story at the expense of biblical truth."

In a 2010 review by Mohler of the book on which the movie is based, he pointed out the book's skewed presentation of the Trinity and the book's concepts of

universalism, universal redemption, and ultimate reconciliation.

In the book, Mohler said, "Jesus tells Mack: 'Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims, Democrats, Republicans and many who don't vote or are not part of any Sunday morning or religious institutions. I have no desire to make them Christian, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters, my Beloved.'"

LifeWay Christian Resources no longer offers the book. Director of Communications Carol Pipes emailed BP, "We stopped carrying *The Shack* a few years ago because although it is a work of fiction, the theology presented as integral to the story clearly conflict with the Bible on many issues, especially in regards to the character and nature of the Trinity."

Mohler describes the book, and the movie to the extent that it aligns with the book, as the opposite of *Pilgrim's Progress*. "It is not credible under any standard of Orthodox Christianity. *Pilgrim's Progress* is a parable that affirms Scripture. *The Shack* you might say is a parable at the expense of Scripture."

The movie opens in wide release March 3, with a special March 2 preview showing. The movie stars Octavia Spencer, who won an Academy Award for her performance in the movie, *The Help*, filmed in Mississippi; country music star and Grammy Award winner Tim McGraw, a Louisiana native; and Australian Sam Worthington.

Brad Cummings and Gil Netter, who produced *The Blind Side*, an Academy Award-winning movie about a University of Mississippi football player which also starred McGraw, are listed as producers of *The Shack*. Londoner Stuart Hazeldine is the movie's director.

## Exec. Comm., NAMB reaching out to young leaders

**ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)** — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee in Nashville and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Alpharetta, Ga., are launching a young leader initiative to better engage pastors between the ages of 25-45.

The network's goal will be to provide a sense of brotherhood for those already participating in Southern Baptist life and to find ways to engage those who are disconnected or minimally involved.

"A look at the research and a look around the room at most SBC meetings tells you we must do a better job at engaging and including young leaders," said

Kevin Ezell, NAMB's president. "I know there are thousands of young pastors who have a great contribution to make to our Southern Baptist family. We want to serve them better and let them know they are loved, valued, and needed."

Frank S. Page, president of the Executive Committee, added his hope that the initiative will lead to increased young pastor participation. "The Executive Committee is delighted to partner with the North American Mission Board in this process of engaging younger pastors and churches. Our driving imperative is to do whatever it takes to see every man, woman, boy, and girl have the opportunity

to hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"I believe this partnership helps make that possible by encouraging those who need to be at the table."

The Executive Committee has hosted or sponsored several events and efforts under Page's leadership to connect with young leaders, including the Southern Baptist Young Leader Network and formation of talkCP, a blog geared toward younger Baptists with the goal of fostering greater understanding of and participation in the Cooperative Program.

Ezell said the Executive Committee and NAMB will form a very diverse group of

advisers that represent an ethnic and theological mix. "We simply want to connect the disconnected pastors and provide opportunities for younger pastors to see the value of being a part of this family we call the SBC."

Jonathan Akin will join NAMB's staff to lead the joint effort. He is transitioning from his role as pastor of Fairview Church in Lebanon, TN.

The entities plan to launch the initiative midway through



AKIN

2017. "This summer will serve as a launch date for a new day in how the SBC mobilizes our next generation of pastors," Page said.

Johnny Hunt, past president of the SBC and senior pastor of Woodstock First Church in Georgia, affirmed the new effort.

"I'm very excited that Jonathan Akin has joined the staff of NAMB to help us reach a generation we are losing or, at best, challenged to reach 25- to 45-year olds," said Hunt, who has long been known within the SBC for his heart for mentoring young pastors. "This is a great move by Kevin Ezell and Frank Page."

The governor of our state has a strong voice and in the current legislative session, he has chosen to use it to support bringing the lottery to Mississippi. In his State of the State address, he pointed out that dollars are being lost as our citizens cross the borders to buy lottery tickets in other states. As recently as last week, he called on the Legislature to make another attempt to pass a bill that would supposedly enable tens of millions of dollars to flow into the state treasury in a day when huge cuts are being made because of the shortfalls of revenue. This would be a great help, he believes.

Really? I would like for the governor, the legislators, and the fine folks of Mississippi to think about five simple questions.

**1. Where is all the revenue that was going to improve schools, build and fix roads, and keep our taxes low from legalizing the sale of beer, wine, and whiskey, or by opening our doors to the casino industry that now lines our river and coastal lands, or even the carving-out of areas of our state for "resort" status that would be lucrative regions because of increased alcohol sales?**

Sounds great, except the schools still struggle. Roads still need more gas tax revenue, and other taxes are still being considered for increases by nearly every state, county, and municipal leader.

**2. Where do the tens of millions of dollars in potential revenue come from?** The dollars that would flow into the state coffers would flow out of the pockets of Mississippi's citizens. In my opinion, that money needs to stay with the people to be used as they see fit. We do not need a lottery system that sets up a state collection agency in every gas station,



## 'No' to the Lottery

convenience store, and grocery store in our state.

For instance, the most recent pile of money that was given away in the multi-state Powerball lottery scheme was worth over \$400 million. States on our borders engender a fever for everybody to get in on the game, while every state government that participates receives a cut of the revenue from folks across the country who lost billions of dollars purchasing tickets. The winning ticket this time was found in Indiana. However, the people who lost their money purchasing the tickets are found in dozens of states.

**3. Where does an individual turn who, after spending all his/her the money to buy lottery tickets, loses and still has needs that must be taken care of?** They look for help in the community, of course, in community care services whether governmental or church-related or community ministries. With economic pressures already in place today that make every dollar count, these helping agencies are already stressed and squeezed

and stretched beyond their resources. Even now they are lovingly doing their job, but do not need the state creating the additional burdens on them that come from the lottery.

**4. What is a lottery?** It's just another form of gambling where you buy a ticket with a number on it hoping that your number will be picked out and you will be the grand prize winner. There are always two big winners when the Powerball numbers are chosen. One is the person who hits the jackpot, and the other is the state treasury. There are millions of people who have lost. A simple follow-up question to that is: What is gambling? The simple answer is that it is games where you put up valuables and then play with the hope of winning many more mega-valuables. Eventually everyone who gambles will lose, and some will lose lots — with the one exception of the people who control the game who in this case would be the state governments who put in place the lottery. I do not believe Mississippi needs to be involved in the state putting

in place across every county and in every corner opportunities for our people to become losers.

**5. How can you help keep a lottery out of Mississippi?** The governor and many of our leaders across the state and our legislators have strong voices in this matter. You can let the governor know today of your opposition. The united voice of people who care can be stronger than one leader's voice or all of the legislative bodies' voices, but you must speak up. One of our legislators was quoted in the newspaper as saying that people don't seem to be opposed to the lottery, in fact they had not even heard from the Baptists. Well, they need to hear from us this week. They need to hear from all of us. Here are their telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. Use this information to express your opposition.

### ■ Governor's Office:

(601) 359-3150

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[www.legislature.ms.gov/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.legislature.ms.gov/Pages/default.aspx)

The governor and those who have supported the lottery have been careful to make this an economic issue. That's fine, except I think the economics need to flow to the people of Mississippi and not into the coffers of the state government. God help us to be able to discern what is best for all the people of our state and not just best to help us through an economic crisis.

The author can be contacted at [directions@mccb.org](mailto:directions@mccb.org).

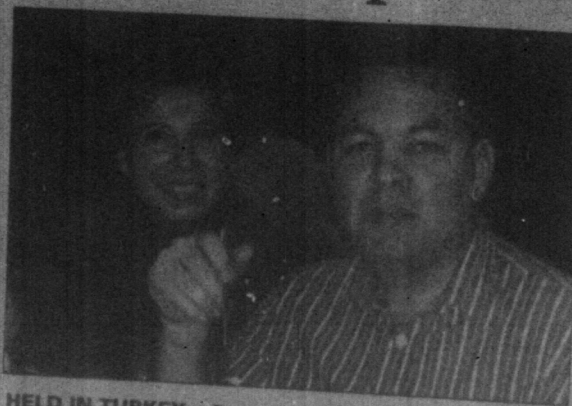
# Release urged for imprisoned American pastor

WASHINGTON (BP) — A bipartisan group of federal lawmakers has signed a letter calling for the release of Andrew Brunson, a U.S. citizen believed to have been jailed for his Christian faith in Turkey where he had pastored more than 23 years.

The chairman and ranking members of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee are among 78 signatories of the letter calling for Brunson's release. Senate committee chairman Bob Corker (R-Tn.) said in a Feb. 16 press release.

Brunson, formerly of Black Mountain, N.C., has been held since October 2016 on accusations of being a member of an armed terrorist group.

"The United States and Turkey have benefited from a close partnership for decades, and we hope to be in a position to continue strengthening these ties," reads the letter sent Feb. 15 to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. "Now is the time for our countries to reaffirm respect for fundamental freedoms and the rule of law



**HELD IN TURKEY** — Pastor Andrew Brunson, shown in this Facebook photo with his wife Norine, is imprisoned in Turkey on false terrorism charges after more than two decades of Christian ministry in that majority Muslim country. (Uncredited photo)

while reasserting our shared commitment to addressing security challenges through partnership and cooperation."

The U.S. lawmakers urged Erdogan "to consider Mr. Brunson's case and how the recent treatment of Mr. Brunson places significant strain not only on him and his family, but

also on the robust bilateral relationship between the United States and Turkey," and appealed to Erdogan "to inquire as to the options for promptly deporting Mr. Brunson and to act on them expeditiously."

Brunson, identified as an Evangelical Presbyterian by the Presbyterian Lay Committee,

had led the Izmir Resurrection Church of about 40 worshippers in Izmir, without government interference until he and his wife Norine sought to renew their Visas.

Brunson is accused of having links with the Fetullah Gulen movement, blamed by the Turkish government for a failed military coup against Erdogan.

The pastor was reportedly detained 63 days since early October 2016 without charges at the Harmandali Detention Center in Izmir, before being imprisoned Dec. 9, 2016 at nearby Sakran Prison. Brunson's wife Norine had also been detained, but was released Oct. 19 after the couple had reportedly been held in isolation two weeks.

The Brunsons have three adult children studying in the U.S.

Joining Corker as signatories are U.S. Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), ranking member of the Senate committee; U.S. Rep. Ed Royce (R-Calif.), House committee chairman, and U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), House committee ranking member. They are joined by 35 senators, including 27 Republicans and eight Democrats; and 39 rep-

resentatives, including 34 Republicans and five Democrats, according to Corker.

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) is also advocating for Brunson's release. In coordination with its European affiliate, the European Centre for Law & Justice (ECLJ), the ACLJ sent a letter to the United Nations Human Rights Council (U.N. HRC) on Brunson's behalf.

"One of the hallmarks of Turkey's proud history is the respect for all faiths. Thus, Turkey should respectfully be reminded of its continuing obligations under its constitution as well as the ICCPR [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights] and UDHR [Universal Declaration of Human Rights] to respect and value the freedom of religion," reads the letter posted on the ACLJ website.

The ECLJ urges this Council to call upon Turkey to honour its obligations. The ECLJ further requests that the U.N. make every effort to ensure that Pastor Brunson is not only treated with great care, but that he is quickly released and allowed to return home without injury or delay."



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## MS POSITIONS

**CENTER HILL BAPTIST CHURCH IN HAMILTON, MS IS LOOKING FOR A FULL-TIME MINISTER OF YOUTH.** Please send resume to Youth Minister Search Committee at P.O. Box 59, Hamilton, MS 39746 or you may email to pastorterryjoe@yahoo.com

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, COLLINS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER.** Please email resume to secretary@fbcollins.com or FBCC POB 997 Collins, MS 39428.

**CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN THE OAK GROVE COMMUNITY OF HATTIESBURG, MS IS CURRENTLY SEARCHING FOR A CHILDREN'S MINISTER.** This will be a part-time position. Applicants who feel led should submit their resumes to calvaryoakgrove@gmail.com

**NEW LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH FLORENCE, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER.** Please send Resume to Worship Search Committee P.O. box 1882 Florence, Ms 39073 or Email to Preacher7248@gmail.com

**SOUTHWAY BAPTIST CHURCH IN BROOKHAVEN, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR MINISTER OF YOUTH.** Please email resumes to southwaybaptist@yahoo.com

**SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR - BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH LOCATED AT MERIDIAN, MS IN THE WHYNOT COMMUNITY OF SOUTHERN LAUDERDALE COUNTY.** Please email resume to office@whynotbethany.org or mail to Bethany Baptist Church 4475 Ponds Road Meridian, MS 39301.

**AMD POSITION OPEN: TISHOMINGO COUNTY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION IS IN SEARCH FOR A NEW AMD.** All qualified Applicants send resumes to broro21@yahoo.com or PO Box 399, Tishomingo MS 38773 Attn: AMD Search Committee. Must be received by March 31, 2017

**CASON BAPTIST CHURCH IN NETTLETON, MS IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME SENIOR PASTOR.** Interested candidates can email resumes to Casonpastorsearch@gmail.com

# State destruction of Sudan churches continues unabated

**JUBA, South Sudan (BP)** — State officials in Sudan have firm plans to destroy at least 25 more church buildings in the Khartoum area, according to Christian leaders.

A letter from the Executive Corporation for the Protection of Government Lands, Environment, Roads and Demolition of Irregularities of Khartoum State reveals the names and locations of 25 church buildings marked for demolition, most of them in the Sharq al Neel (East Nile area) locality of Khartoum North.

The government reportedly claimed the churches were built on land zoned for other uses, but Christian leaders said it is part of wider crack-down on Christianity.

The Rev. Yahia Abdelrahman Nalu, moderator of the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church's Sudan Evangelical Synod, told Morning Star News the subsequent order was part of a systematic attack on churches by the Islamist government.

"This is not an isolated act but should be taken with wider perspective," he said. The order targets a wide range of denominations, from Roman Catholic to Pentecostal.

The Sudan Council of Churches denounced the order at a Feb. 11 press conference, calling on the government to reconsider the decision or provide alternative sites for the churches. The Rev. Mubarak Hamad, chairman of the Sudan Council of Churches, pointed out at the conference in Khartoum that mosques located in the same area were spared from the demolition order.

Hamad said the order, issued in June 2016, was aimed at 27 church buildings. The order included a Presbyterian Church of Sudan in Jebel Aulia, and one belonging to the Sudanese Church of Christ (SCOC) in Soba al Aradi, both south of Khartoum.

The order by Mohammad el Sheikh Mohammad, general manager of the land department in the Ministry of Physical Planning, urged that it be implemented immediately.

"I am hereby issuing the order of demolition of the churches that are attached to residential areas and public playgrounds in neighborhoods of East Nile locality," Mohammad wrote in a cover letter to the Executive Corporation dated June 20, 2016.

Among the 25 church buildings listed are three located on public playgrounds. The rest are located in residential areas, according to the order.

Last Sept. 29, officials from Khartoum state's Ministry of Planning and Urban Development notified leaders of the Presbyterian Church of Sudan that they had 72 hours to vacate their property. The church building was one of five that officials at that time said were slated



Photo by sevenMaps7/Shutterstock.com

for demolition to make way for investor development.

"We were surprised as a church at such a move," a member of the church told Morning Star News at that time. "The church building has been there since 1991. We are still worshipping there but fearful of the demolition any time."

The church, whose Sunday attendance ranges from 80 to 150 people, declined to vacate as they had no alternative site for worship, he said. The letter from state officials asserted the land on which the church building was situated was designated as private property for gardens.

Three Sudanese Church of Christ congregations, along with one belonging to the Episcopal Church of Sudan, also received demolition notices on Sept. 29.

Sudan since 2012 has bulldozed church buildings and harassed and expelled foreign Christians, usually on the claim that the buildings belonged to South Sudanese. The Sudanese Minister of Guidance and Endowments announced in April 2013 that no new licenses would be granted for building new churches in Sudan, citing a decrease in the South Sudanese population.

The government's decision to issue no new church building licenses came after South Sudan seceded from Sudan in July 2011, when President Omar al-Bashir vowed to adopt a stricter version of Sharia (Islamic law) and recognize only Islamic culture and the Arabic language.

After bulldozing a Lutheran Church of Sudan building on Oct. 21, 2015, authorities in the Karari area of Omdurman demolished an SCOC building on Oct. 27, 2015, without prior warning, church leaders said.

Local authorities said the SCOC building was on government land, a claim church leaders adamantly denied.

Karari officials in Omdurman, across the Nile River from Khartoum, reportedly authorized the demolition of the church building claiming it was built on gov-

ernment land allocated for a field. In the demolishing of the LCS church on Oct. 21, the local authorities said it was built on land allocated for business — though a mosque stands nearby.

Ethnic Nuba have long suffered discrimination from the Arab population and authorities of Sudan. The Nuba people have longstanding complaints against Khartoum including neglect, persecution, and forced conversions to Islam in a 1990s jihad.

Sudan fought a civil war with the South Sudanese from 1983 - 2005. In June 2011, shortly before the secession of South Sudan the following month, the government began fighting a rebel group in the Nuba Mountains that has its roots in South Sudan.


Sudanese authorities on Feb. 17, 2014, demolished another SCOC church building in Omdurman without prior notice. Bulldozers accompanied by local police and personnel from Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) destroyed the worship building in the Ombada area of Omdurman, sources said.

On Aug. 24, 2014, NISS agents padlocked the building of the 500-member Sudan Pentecostal Church in Khartoum, which housed the Khartoum Christian Center.

Due to its treatment of Christians and other human rights violations, Sudan has been designated a Country of Particular Concern by the U.S. State Department since 1999. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom recommended the country remain on the list in its 2016 report.

Sudan ranked fifth on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of countries where Christians face most persecution.

*Editor's note: Based on reporting by Morning Star News, a California-based independent news service focusing on the persecution of Christians worldwide. Edited for style and clarity.*



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## Just for the Record



**WILLIAMSVILLE CHURCH, KOSCIUSKO**, recently ordained Mike Barentine to the gospel ministry. He is currently the pastor of Harvest Point Church, Kosciusko. He is shown with pastor Junior Davis.



**MT. OLIVE CHURCH, BALDWIN**, participated in Disciple Now 2017. Shown are the participants.



**FIRST CHURCH, CHICORA**, recently held a GA recognition. Mitchell Smith, pastor.



**TUCKERS CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL**, held a recognition of new members. Each new member was presented a book, *I Am a Church Member*, by Thom S. Rainer. Eddie Bryant, pastor.



**FIRST CHURCH, BELZONI**, recently held a deacon ordination. Shown are Bobby Price and Royce Steed, with their wives Bea Price and Emma Steed.



The Women's Ministry of **NORTH COLUMBIA CHURCH, COLUMBIA**, hosted their first event of the year, Mardi Gras Madness, Feb. 4. Stephanie Byrd, guest speaker.



The children of **CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, painted Christmas woodwork donated by a member, Jimmy Veazey.

### In other Church News:

► The Scott County Association WMU Leadership Team is sponsoring a Women's Conference Mar. 3 and 4, hosted by Bethlehem Church. Fri., supper at 6 p.m.; Sat., 9 a.m., with lunch provided; Nicole Duncan Smith, speaker; Natalie Duncan Emmons, praise and worship; \$20 for both services; \$10 for one service.



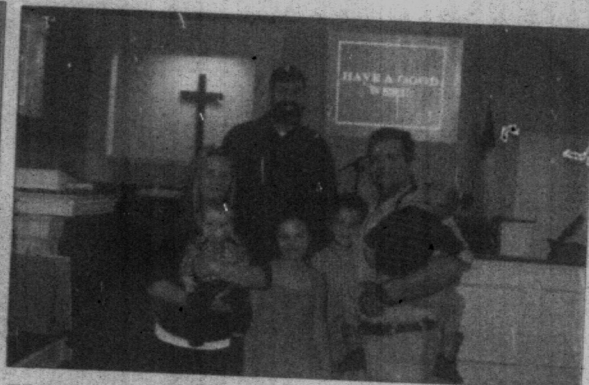
Children from **EAST PLEASANT GROVE CHURCH, QUITMAN**, visited Lakeside Living Center Feb. 12. The children sang songs, quoted memory verses, sang solos, read the Bible, and handed out Valentine cards.



## Just for the Record



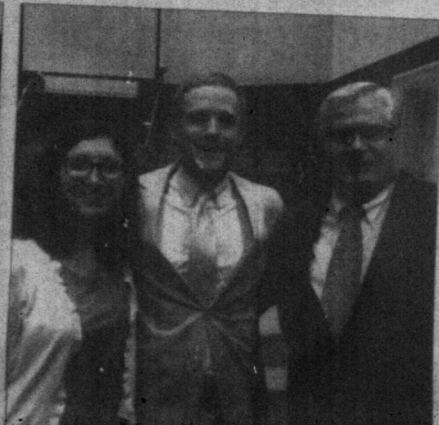
**NEW LIBERTY CHURCH, MORTON**, participated in Children's Ministry Day on February 18, with 30 children in attendance and 20 adults. The message was presented through music and puppetry by John Yates Ministry. They completed 4 separate mission projects. Paul Smith, pastor.



**TOOMSUBA CHURCH, LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION**, held a baby dedication for Huck Benjamin Hasty, son of Justin and Kellie Hasty. Steven Wade officiated.



**LANTRIP CHURCH, BRUCE**, held a sweet-heart banquet, including a sweet heart stacking contest.



**NORTH COLUMBIA CHURCH, COLUMBIA**, ordained music minister Kyle Brazell Feb. 12. Shown are Lindsey Brazell, Brazell, and Billy Wayne Powell.



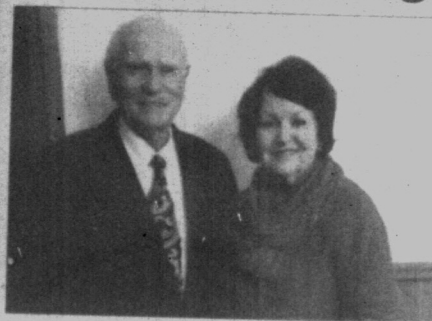
The children and youth Bible drillers of **TUCKER'S CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL**, assisted in the preparation and delivery of meals at the Christian Food Mission. Meals are delivered to the elderly and homebound in the Glade-Tuckers Crossing area. They are shown with leaders Carolyn Holifield and Bobbie Bridges. Eddie Bryant, pastor.

### PLEASE PRAY AND CONSIDER ATTENDING ONE OF THESE TELL ME RALLIES!

DATE	TIME	COUNTY/CITY	LOCATION
Mar. 6	11 a.m.	Prentiss / Booneville	Steps of City Hall
Mar. 6	2 p.m.	Tishomingo / Iuka	Iuka Mineral Springs Park
Mar. 7	11 a.m.	Benton / Ashland	Benton County Courthouse
Mar. 7	2 p.m.	Tippah / Ripley	Tippah County Courthouse
Mar. 7	4 p.m.	Union / New Albany	Magnolia Civic Center
Mar. 9	9 a.m.	Claiborne / Port Gibson	Matt Ross Administration Building
Mar. 9	11 a.m.	Jefferson / Fayette	Jefferson County Courthouse
Mar. 9	6 p.m.	Alcorn / Corinth	First Baptist Church
Mar. 13	9 a.m.	Wayne / Waynesboro	Wayne County Courthouse
Mar. 13	11 a.m.	Clarke / Quitman	Clarke County Courthouse
Mar. 13	2 p.m.	Lauderdale / Meridian	DuMont Plaza (Downtown)
Mar. 13	4 p.m.	Kemper / DeKalb	Keyes - McRae Park
Mar. 14	9 a.m.	Philadelphia Reservation / Choctaw	Pearl River Amphitheatre @ Choctaw Reservation
Mar. 14	noon	Jasper / Bay Springs	Jasper Baptist Association lawn
Mar. 14	2 p.m.	Smith / Raleigh	Smith County Courthouse
Mar. 16	11 a.m.	Tunica / Tunica	Tunica Marketplace
Mar. 16	2 p.m.	Quitman / Marks	Marks East Main Community Center
Mar. 16	4 p.m.	Coshocta / Clarksdale	Clarksdale Civic Auditorium
Mar. 20	10 a.m.	Calhoun / Bruce	Bruce City Square
Mar. 20	noon	Webster / Walthall	Walthall Baptist Church

VISIT [WWW.MBCB.ORG](http://WWW.MBCB.ORG) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

### Staff Changes



**BECKER CHURCH, BECKER**, has called Gayle Alexander as interim pastor. He is shown with his wife, Keliea.

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NASA rendering

## Professors tamp excitement over new planet discoveries

**NASHVILLE (BP and local reports)** — At least some of scientists' enthusiasm over discovery of seven potentially-habitable planets seems to reflect the misplaced hopes of a secular worldview. That is the assessment of a Union University physicist and a Gateway Seminary Old Testament professor following the Feb. 22 announcement by NASA that astronomers have detected the first known system of seven Earth-sized planets rotating around a single star.

Bill Nettles, chair of the physics department at Union, which is affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention, told Baptist Press in written comments that the excitement among some scientists over the possibility of extra-terrestrial life simply confirms a longstanding assumption that "surely life must exist somewhere in the universe."

That assumption "has been a theme of writers for centuries, and we shouldn't expect it to wane," he observed. "For Christians, there is already a hope that there is life elsewhere, but we don't need to find it in some other planet. It is found in the promises of God, revealed in the human-divine person of Jesus of Nazareth."

The discovery of other planets around other stars "should be no more surprising to us today than the discovery of rocky planets in our own solar system centuries ago," Nettles said. "The Bible begins with the creation of the heavens and earth. These discoveries do not dispute that."

The newly discovered planetary system, located some 40 light years from Earth, is called TRAPPIST-1, named for the Belgian-operated Transiting Planets and Planetsimals Small

Telescope that first detected some of its components.

NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope confirmed the existence of two planets in the system and discovered five more, according to a NASA press release, for a total of seven confirmed planets.

All seven likely are rocky and could possess liquid water, "the key to life as we know it," according to NASA. Three of the planets fall within a "habitable zone," where rocky planets are most likely to have liquid water.

The planets purportedly are so close together that a person standing on the surface of one could see others in the sky with appearances larger than Earth's moon.

Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator of NASA's Science Mission Directorate in Washington, D.C., said the discovery "could be a significant piece in the puzzle of finding habitable environments." He added that "answering the question, 'Are we alone?' is a top science priority," according to the NASA release.

Nettles said even if further study fails to reveal gases on the planets which might indicate biological activity, there "will be no dashing of hope" among secularists for life in TRAPPIST-1.

Believers should remember the TRAPPIST-1 planets are governed by scientific laws "actively upheld by a powerful and loving God," and that "nothing about the discovery of Earth-sized planets around a dim star affects the Christian narrative of Creation-Fall-Redemption-Glorification."

Paul Smith, associate professor of Old Testament studies at Southern Baptists' Gateway Seminary in Ontario, Ca., told BP the underlying purpose of searching for life away from

earth often seems driven by a quest "to prove evolution."

Individuals on such a quest believe life on another planet "would indicate randomness in where life happens as long as the conditions are right rather than by the hand of God."

In response to that notion, Smith said, "The finding of water on a planet, bacteria, or even some form of an atmosphere does not affect our understanding of the Bible's doctrine of Creation."

Gateway Seminary is the former Golden Gate Seminary, which earlier this year completed a name change and a move from Mill Valley, Ca., in the San Francisco area to Ontario in the Los Angeles area.

Bacteria and similar organisms "may be life" in a scientific sense, said Smith, pastor of First Church in Chandler, Az., and vice-president of the 2017 Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, but they are "not living" as the Bible defines it. That designation is reserved for creatures granted "breath" by God, he said in written comments.

Scripture seems to rule out the existence of life forms comparable to humans on any other celestial body, Smith said.

"Finding complex life forms would change our view of Creation and even more importantly our view of salvation," he said. "The Bible is clear that sin came into the world through one man, Adam, and is forgiven through one man, Jesus. Those two truths do not allow for life on another planet that is intelligent enough to discern between right and wrong."

NASA has said it will perform follow-up studies on TRAPPIST-1 in the years ahead.

## Mo. Governor blasts 'sanctuary city' label

**JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP and local reports)** — Republican Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens has pledged to lead a fight to repeal a bill passed by the all-Democrat St. Louis Board of Aldermen essentially making St. Louis a "sanctuary city" for abortion.

Known as Board Bill 203, it places pregnancy and reproductive health, including the decision to abort a child, alongside already-protected classes such as race, gender, religion, and disability in the city's anti-discrimination ordinance.

According to LifeNews.com, Missouri Right to Life has warned that Board Bill 203 could force landlords to rent property to abortion providers or abortion advocacy groups and punish employers, including religious organizations, who refuse to hire someone who publicly supports abortion.

"BB 203 attempts to force churches and others to be complicit in the profound evil of abortion," LifeNews.com reported Missouri Right to Life as contending.

Greitens, a Rhodes Scholar and former U.S. Navy Seal who said he wants Missouri to be a leader in protecting the lives of the unborn, shared his commitment to fight the St. Louis measure in a phone call with Don Hinkle, editor of the Missouri Baptist Convention's newsjournal The Pathway and public policy adviser for the state's Baptists.

"We must protect people of faith and we must protect the unborn," Greitens, who is Jewish, said according to a Pathway report Feb. 16. "We must win this and I am proud to lead the fight on this issue."

Greitens, who took office in January, did not say what steps he is prepared to take but The Pathway article noted that proposed legislation reportedly is being drafted in the state's General Assembly to nullify or overturn Board Bill 203, which was adopted Feb. 10 by the Board of Aldermen by a vote of 17-10.

Hinkle said Board Bill 203 is "an evil law that must be overturned and I promised the governor that Missouri Southern Baptists will assist him in fighting this vile action that makes St. Louis a city of death and targets the least among us — the unborn."

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch newspaper quoted the bill's sponsor, Megan Green, who represents the 15th Ward, as saying that employers "can have their own beliefs" but they "shouldn't be able to impose those beliefs on people or fire someone because of those beliefs."

Noah Oldham, an elder at August Gate Church and North American Mission Board Send City Coordinator for St. Louis, attended the Jan. 18 hearing to testify against the bill but time expired before he could speak. He spoke individually with various members of the Board of Aldermen, urging them to defend life.



GREITENS

## BIBL10C1PHER

PGKVJGT DA VJG DNQQF QH IQCVU

CPF ECNXGU, DWV DA JKU QYP DNQQF

JG GPGVTGF KP QPEG KPVQ VJG JQNA

RNCEG, JCXKPI QDVCKPGF GVGTPCN

TGFGORVKQP HQT WU.

JGDTGYU PKPG: VYGNXG

Clue: K = 1

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalm 43:5

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005



## REBUILD

cont. from p. 1

is, we have the 'want to' to help them do it."

The hope is that others will see Jesus in them.

Headrick and his wife Gina, members of Salem Heights Church in Laurel, opened the first Mission at the Cross in Sturgis, S.D., in 2007. The location in Laurel followed in 2008 and there are now locations in Arkansas, Indiana, North Carolina, Florida and even Germany, with 700-plus men having participated in the program.

The Laurel location, specifically, was born out of the Headricks' burden for their hometown and the men who found themselves in need of a hand up from the pit of brokenness. Though initially conceived as a short-term facility for those in need of temporary shelter and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, mission employees quickly saw that an extended, more intensive plan was needed.

"It's one thing to offer salvation, pray a prayer, and send someone on their way, but discipleship takes time," explains Michael Smith, who worked at MATC-Laurel before enrolling

at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth.

"MATC inevitably became a six-month, in-house facility. Now, men not only hear and see Jesus working day-to-day from the moment they enter the door, but they have the opportunity to learn how to walk through those trials and tests that come our way after we accept Christ."

The mission provides up to 25 residents at a time with a structured daily schedule featuring a variety of activities that build character, labor skills, and leadership qualities. Each day begins and ends with Bible study and prayer. Many of the activities in between are community service projects, including mowing lawns, cleaning out sheds, and building handicap ramps for the elderly.

Smith, who graduated Southwestern Seminary with master's degrees in theology and biblical counseling in 2016, says that through the course of these activities and the numerous opportunities for mentoring, the men learn what brotherhood is and what it means to be a man of God.

"They learn what it is to be sons, husbands, fathers, brothers, and employees, and what it is like to walk out our faith

day-to-day, and how to be light in this world which seems to be growing increasingly darker.

"At MATC, it's so much more than just learning to live a clean and sober life. It's about learning how to live a full and abundant life centered around God and the truth of His Word."

A key MATC activity that allows for an abundant life is vocational training. Gina, who along with her husband is a member of Southwestern Seminary's Board of Visitors, says the mission's detox program is, "a Bible in one hand and a hammer in the other." The program is free of charge, she says, "but they learn to work," receiving training in, among other things, engine mechanics, carpentry, masonry, manufacturing, and landscaping.

Roger Tucker, whose written testimony is available on MATC's website, is one example of the impact of this comprehensive program.

"When I came to the mission in 2009, my family had given up on me because of my history with drugs and alcohol and I, too, had given up on myself. I thought the mission would be just another rehab program. I didn't think it would work for me.

"However, by the grace of God, I have not only overcome the debilitating hold that alcohol had on my life, my relationship with my family has been restored and I am now the house leader at Mission at the Cross-Laurel! It is my joy to now help other men who are struggling as I did and share with them what Jesus can do for them and how He can give them a new life."

Numerous other testimonies accompany Tucker's, detailing how God used MATC to rescue them from Satan's grasp and guide them into the freedom found in Christ Jesus.

Evan Sparks writes, "I was alone in a dark world, fighting tooth and nail, trying to



**WORKING THE PLAN** — Mission at the Cross co-founder Richard Headrick (right) and Mike Shirley of Laurel, one of the ministry's directors, discuss plans for the 25 men under their physical and spiritual care at the ministry. (BP photo by Adam Covington)

obtain just a speck of hope... During my nine-month stay at Mission at the Cross, I learned many useful tools that are helping me to succeed in my daily walk as a Christian and as a college student.

"The Lord has put me on a path that I never thought could be possible. It definitely is not easy, but I know for a fact that had I not been prepared by God at Mission at the Cross, I would not be sitting here today."

Mike Shirley, director of MATC-Laurel, says the testimonies serve as great tools for evangelism.

"Some of [these men] don't know Job from Job or Psalms from psalms, [but] they can get up and say, 'Oh, He touched me,' and that's the mission speaking. I tell them, 'If we speak about Him, we lift His name up on high, if all you do is get up and say the Lord Jesus Christ has changed my heart, then it just went out of the park.'"

During a chapel presentation at Southwestern Seminary in April 2015, Richard Headrick said his aim in life is "to keep Satan ticked off." Though

not everyone who comes through MATC goes on to become the man God called him to be, the mission's numerous success stories from the past eight years — each comprising how Jesus became cemented in the heart and mind of yet another man in whom Satan previously "had his hooks" — serve to glorify God and keep Satan "ticked off."

Smith affirms, "There's nothing like being part of someone coming to know Christ and watching them learn to walk in obedience while the Lord restores their lives, their families, their jobs, and all the other things that Satan has stolen and destroyed. This is what's at the heart of MATC: restoration of the broken, hope to the hopeless."

Sibley is associate director of news and information at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth. This article first appeared in *Southwestern News*, a quarterly publication of the seminary, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and clarity.

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail. **as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: [baptistrecord@mbcb.org](mailto:baptistrecord@mbcb.org).

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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



# THE VILLAGE VIEW



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## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals seek to participate in others through this service, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further support our residents and ensure those who are not able to be present for our special events.

DECEMBER 16-31

### MEMORIALS

Frank Kendall  
Mr. & Mrs. Daniel A. Smith  
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Miss Sarah Marie Smith  
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## Area Banquets



THE BAPTIST CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

120 Years of Excellence in Ministry

### Dinner

### Program

Hear from New Executive Director, Sean A. Milner  
BCV Alumni Testimonies | Special Music

### Time

6:30 p.m.

### Cost

\$15 — Individual Plates

### Dates

February 20 — FBC Laurel  
February 27 — FBC Greenville  
February 28 — Gaston Baptist Church, Booneville  
March 6 — Morrison Heights Baptist Church, Clinton  
March 7 — FBC Brookhaven  
March 9 — Northcrest Baptist Church, Meridian

### Online Registration

www.baptistchildrensvillage.com

## BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY IN NORTH MISSISSIPPI

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at [www.baptistchildrensvillage.com](http://www.baptistchildrensvillage.com).



# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS FOR MARCH 5, 2017

## Who Is Jesus? • Matthew 16:13-28

This quarter our lessons will be in the New Testament book of Matthew. Having studied the Old Testament last quarter, some will be glad we are in more familiar territory; but there is a danger in familiarity. We have read the upcoming scriptures so often we might be tempted to merely glance at them while not seeking a deeper application to our lives. Let that not be the case. Challenge yourself to look with fresh eyes and come away more deeply in love with these words.

According to the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary of Matthew*, Matthew can be divided into 5 sections: The birth and preparation of Jesus' ministry; Jesus' public ministry; Jesus' private ministry to His disciples; Ministry in Judea leading to the cross; And the death and resurrection of Jesus. Our study will begin with Jesus' private ministry to His disciples. It would be beneficial, however, to read chapters 1-15 to understand all Jesus had been teaching. Note when we come to Matthew 16 we see a change in mood and intensity. Knowing the cross was in the very near future, Jesus considered it necessary to cement in the minds of those who had been with Him for nearly three years, that things were about to change. Jesus had been well known throughout the area

as a great preacher and healer. Massive crowds followed Him for what they could receive. However, the beginning of Chapter 16 reveals a change as Jesus warned his disciples of the "yeast of the Pharisees." (vs. 6) Very soon the crowds would not be hanging onto Jesus' every word but would be intent upon hanging Him on a cross. To contend with this, Jesus asks two important questions. As we move toward Resurrection Sunday, let's stand in the sandals of the disciples and hear afresh those questions for ourselves.

The first question is found in Matthew 16:13: "Who do people say I am?" The disciples' answers indicate the people didn't have a clue. The masses of people, blinded by their needs, were not focused on Jesus' identity. They were content to believe hearsay. Then we see Jesus' piercing eyes looking into the souls of those who had been with Him and should have known Him best, "But you?"



### Explore the Bible with Cyndi Grace

Who do you say I am?" From Simon's lips we hear, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." God had revealed the truth to Simon; a truth that would change everything. Jesus confirmed this statement much to Simon's relief. Perhaps the other disciples had flirted with this thought, even desired it, but there it was, set in stone. What would it mean?

One of the things it meant was a name change. "And I also say to you that you

are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (vs. 18) So, was Peter, the man,

the rock upon which the church would be built? Not at all. However, the true identity of who Jesus was, The Messiah, the Son of the living God, would be the foundation of the coming church. This truth would prevail and death would be defeated. This was a great name change!

Then as the disciples were celebrating this fact, Jesus began to share what this

meant: suffering, death and a resurrection. Perhaps they got stuck on the words "suffering" and "death" for Peter, still beaming over his correct answer, began to rebuke Jesus. (vss. 21-23) His fleshly rock began to crumble. Following a Messiah is one thing but going to the cross is something else and Simon wanted none of it. On the heels of a blessing came a rebuke as Jesus pointed out the difference between man's thoughts and God's thoughts. This preparation was going to be harder than they thought.

The lesson for us is to know who Jesus is. He is called a good man, a prophet, or a great teacher. None of those identities, however, will help us withstand possible persecution. We need to know that Jesus is God and Messiah (Savior). We need to know He is the Rock we can stand upon when everything else crumbles. The victory comes in knowing who Jesus is. Paul wrote, "I know the One I have believed in and am persuaded that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day." II Timothy 1:12 (HCSB)

So, you, who do you say He is?

Grace is a Bible teacher, conference leader, and member of First Church, Clinton.

## Jesus, Our Victor • Revelation 1:12-20

One of my Dad's favorite hymns is "Victory in Jesus". And with good reason, for in just three simple words, Eugene Monroe Bartlett, the writer of that beautiful song, captured and characterized the type of life every believer can and should have in Christ. It is truly one of victory because Jesus is the victor.

Over the next seven weeks we will focus on the various kinds of victories Jesus brings to those who know him and call him Lord. We will realize that in Christ we are winners over life, over our circumstances, over sin, over fear, over anxiety and, finally and ultimately, over the grave. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, no power on earth or in heaven can defeat those who belong to the Lord. We are more than conquerors through Christ.

This week our attention turns to the riveting and radical personal encounter John had with the resurrected Lord while he was exiled on the small, desolate island of Patmos. What a huge message of hope and encouragement he received first hand so that Christians of his day and those generations of believers who would follow could stand strong for their Lord in the worst of times.

What the Apostle saw and heard would forever change his life and ministry as well as the first century believers who were suffering severely at the hands of Roman persecution. But this portrait and profile of Jesus continues even today to inspire followers of Christ. Just who and what did John see and hear? It is recorded in Revelation 1:12-18 (NIV):

I turned around to see the voice that

was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he

held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

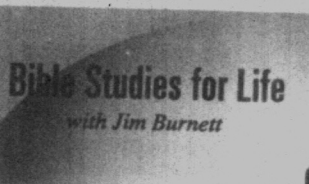
The person John encountered was none other than the resurrected Son of God who was slain for our sin and had risen from

the dead. There are many take aways for us to glean from John's meticulous description of this one who stood before him. I will mention only a few. First of all, Jesus is alive and well and present with his church today like he was with his church then. As he walked among the seven churches of Asia Mi-

nor he moves among his people today. Second, we will all get to see the One John saw. And when we do, we too may very well fall down at his feet like dead men, for what our eyes will see and our ears will hear will blow our circuits. What a day that will be when we see Jesus face to face. Third, the greatest enemy humanity has ever faced, Jesus annihilated. In other words, what death did to Jesus is nothing compared to what Jesus did to death. He is truly the First and the Last, the Living One. He holds the keys to death and Hades. At the graveside of Lazarus our Lord spoke these words to Mary and Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (Jn. 11:25-26 NIV).

Jesus is truly our victor and in him we have victory. No matter what we are facing today, through God's grace and empowerment, we can handle it with grace and optimism, for truly we have victory in Jesus.

Burnett is pastor of Willow Pointe Church, Hattiesburg.



### Bible Studies for Life with Jim Burnett



He earned a doctor of philosophy degree in English literature and a post-doctoral master of education at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. Additionally, he holds a certificate in educational management from Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

The Fants are parents to 18-year-old twins Ethan and

Emily. Fant's father, Gene C. Fant Sr., is a retired pastor, and his mother, Mona Faith Fant, is a syndicated radio host, songwriter, and country-gospel artist. The elder Fants live in San Antonio, Texas.

He is the grandson of the late Thomas Edison Fant, a Mississippi-born evangelist and pastor.

While growing up, Gene Fant Jr. with his family moved from Mississippi to New York where his father planted nine churches in seven years. His father also pastored in California, Virginia, and Tennessee.

NGU was established in 1892 as a Baptist academy for northern Greenville County high school students. Today, as a lib-

eral arts university, NGU offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in more than 35 academic programs and serves more than 2,500 students.

NGU is one of three universities, along with Anderson University in Anderson and Charleston Southern in North Charleston, with ties to the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

## FANT

cont. from p. 1

Fant earned a bachelor of science degree from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va.; a master of arts in English from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va.; and a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary.

# Lent doesn't catch on with general public

NASHVILLE (BP) — More than three-quarters of Americans admitted in a recent LifeWay Research poll that they don't typically observe Lent, a traditional time of preparation for the observation of Easter that began this year on March 1 and ends during the approaching Holy Week.

Unlike other Christian traditions like Christmas, Lent seems to lack crossover appeal to the general public, said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research, an arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

Lent has remained a mostly religious event, McConnell said, rather than one that appeals to the broader public as does Christmas. He suspects that's because Lent focuses on giving things up in order to gain spiritual benefits in preparation for Easter. There's no social benefit to Lent, like giving gifts or getting together with family.

It's a religious tradition that remains focused on personal devotion, McConnell explained.

"Lent is not about having your best life now. Those who observe it believe they are giving up things they want in order to focus on what God wants. There's little popular appeal in that."

Part of Lent includes various forms of fasting as a spiritual discipline, a practice that dates back to the early church. Lent traditionally lasts for 40 days excluding Sundays, a time frame established after the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.

According to the LifeWay Research survey, Catholics (61%) remain most likely to observe Lent. Protestants (20%) and those with evangelical beliefs (28%) are less likely to observe Lent.

Forty-three percent of those who attend church at least once a month observe Lent. That includes 82% of Catholics who regularly attend services as well as 30% of Protestants.

Americans over age 55 are more likely to observe Lent (30%) than those under age 55 (20%). Hispanic Americans (36%) and Christians in general (35%) also are more likely to observe Lent.

Those from non-Christian faiths (12%), "Nones" with no denominational affiliation (four percent) and those who attend services less than once a month (15%) are less likely to observe Lent.

McConnell said the degree of popularity of Lent among those with evangelical beliefs is surprising. Lent is often associated with Catholics and Mainline Protestants from more liturgical denominations, he said, but it holds appeal for evangelicals as well.

For one Baptist pastor, however, observing Lent doesn't carry special meaning. Rob Pochek, pastor of First Church on Park Street in Charlottesville, Va., wrote in a 2015 blog, "It seems to me that any attempt I may make does not memorialize the death of Christ as much as it trivializes it."

Pochek, who noted his mother's side of the family is Catholic — including three great aunts who are nuns and a great uncle who is

"Lent is not about having your best life now. Those who observe it believe they are giving up things they want in order to focus on what God wants. There's little popular appeal in that."

Scott McConnell

executive director of LifeWay Research

a priest — wrote, "In one sense, the death of Christ was the most horrific thing in all of human history... At the same time, it was the most glorious of all deaths. In the death of Jesus, God reconciled the world to Himself."

Contacted by Baptist Press on Feb. 15, Pochek said the 2015 column continues to reflect his outlook toward Lent.

The LifeWay Research poll asked Americans who observe Lent about how they observe this Christian tradition.

Fasting from a favorite food or beverage (57%) and going to church (57%) are the most common ways to observe Lent. Additional prayer (39%), giving to others (38%) or fasting from a bad habit (35%) also are popular. Fasting from a favorite activity is less common (23%).

Fasting from a favorite food or beverage is more common in the western U.S. (62%) than the northeast U.S. (42%). Young Americans ages 18 - 24 who observe Lent are more likely to choose this option (86%) than those over age 65 (43%). Catholics (64%) are more likely to give up a food or drink than Protestants (43%).

Midwesterners observing Lent are more likely to pray more (52%) than those in the northeast (29%) or south (35%). Those who attend services at least once a month are more likely to pray more (55%) than those who don't (18%) attend services at least once a month.

Hispanic Americans (34%) are more likely to give up a favorite habit than white Americans (17%). They are also more likely to give up a bad habit (50%) than white Americans (30%) or those from other ethnicities (11%).

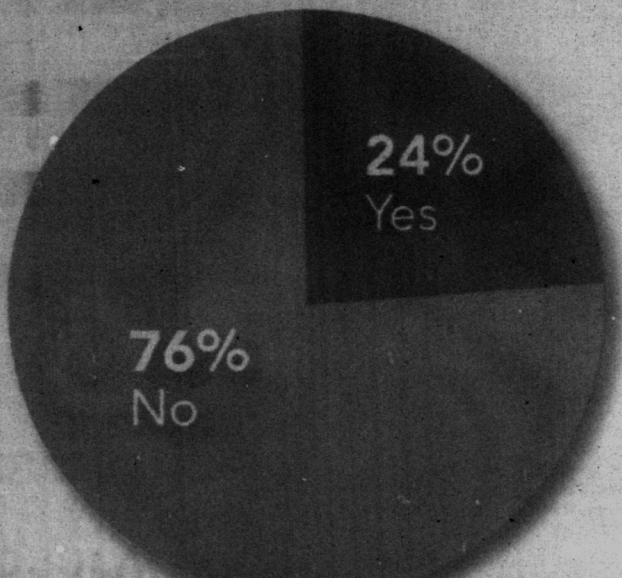
Catholics (46%) are more likely to give to others while observing Lent than Protestants (32%). Those who go to church at least once a month (49%) are more likely to give to others than those who don't attend church as often (22%).

Those with evangelical beliefs (71%) are more likely to go to church during Lent than those without evangelical beliefs (54%). Those who attend church at least once a month go to church more during Lent (76%) than those who don't (32%).

"There's a lot more to Lent than giving things up," McConnell said. Americans who observe Lent also take other steps like praying, giving, and going to church more to practice their faith."

Among Americans

## Do you typically observe Lent?



Among Americans who observe Lent

## How do you typically observe Lent?

Fast from a favorite food or beverage



Attend church services



Pray more



Give to others



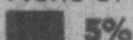
Fast from a bad habit



Fast from a favorite activity



None of these



Note: Respondents could select all that apply.

LifeWay

LifeWayResearch.com